Postcards From Exmoor

Classic Club Images That Traveled Well

It Happened at the Fair.

The World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893 thrilled 27 million visitors from around the world with classical architecture, cultural displays, and a dazzling array of industrial and consumer innovations.

Visitors received postcards showing the Fair on Chicago's South Side, the first use of postcards as souvenirs. The US Post Office held a monopoly on printing cards until 1898, when private companies entered the field, launching an industry and creating tens of thousands of new images.

Overnight, the "penny postcard" was a vital form of personal communication. By 1908, Americans were mailing more than 650 million postcards per year.

The postcard craze touched Exmoor Country Club. From 1907, the club invited several postcard companies to photograph club scenes.

This essay shows 24 cards from the Exmoor Archives, the club's collection of historical photos, vital documents and memorabilia. Many thanks to member Alvin Kruse who has enabled the club to copy several Exmoor postcards from his personal collection.

Some Exmoor postcards contain messages sent to recipients in distant states.

All of the postcards -- and the fact of their creation -- underscore the pride Exmoor members had in their club over a century ago. They wanted to show their beautiful clubhouse and golf course to friends and relatives across America.

(Produced by the History Committee for the members of Exmoor, 2014.)

This card from 1907 is the oldest in the Exmoor collection, obtained in digital form from the Lake County Discovery Museum. Located in Wauconda, the Museum holds the world's largest public collection of postcards.

The club's dirt entrance road was first paved in 1913 with a new type of concrete (right).

Just above the boy's head is the tee of the first hole of Exmoor's first 18 hole layout, which opened in 1901. The starting hole was 275 yards and went northeast, with the green near today's 9th green.

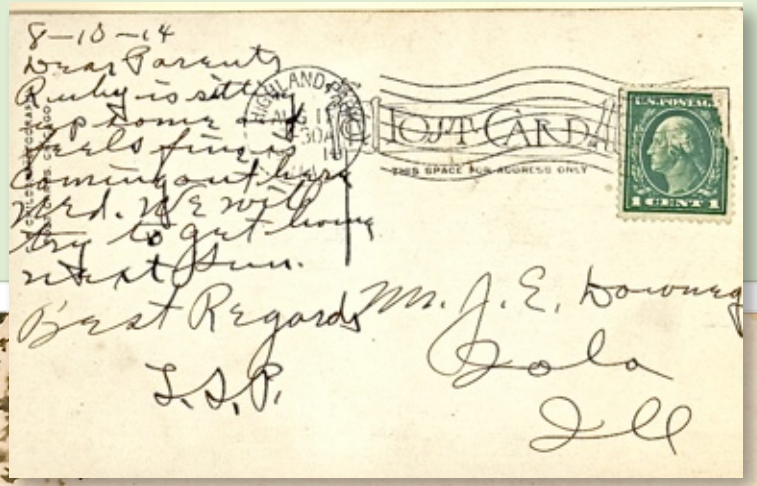
Publisher: E. C. Kropp Co., Milwaukee
Postmark: 1910 Ravinia, Ill. (incorporated into Highland Park in 1899, but maintained a separate post office until 1918.)
Sent to: Miss Ethel book, 2320 N. Clark St., Chicago.

"My Dear Ethel, Just a P.C. (post card) to let you know I am feeling fairly well now, I went to work this morning Thurs. I guess you will think I have forgotten you. But nothing like that. I am always thinking of you. Well Ethel, will be Saturday now. Give my love to all. (?) Bye, Art.

East Entrance, Exmoor Golf Links, Highland Park, Ill.

Publisher: C. R. Childs Photography, Chicago
Postmark: August 17, 1914, Highland Park, Ill.
Sent to: Mr. J. E. Downey, Iola, Ill

"8-10-14, Dear Parents, Ruby is sitting up some and feels fine, is coming out here Wed. We will get to home next Sun. Best Regards, L.S.P."



Documenting A Golf Course

More than a bucolic sports scene, the 1914 Childs postcard (here in detail) is a valuable record showing design features of the Exmoor golf course. The long bunkers, called copses, were an early type of hazard. The far bunker crossed today's 16th fairway, with the stand of trees in the background and a maintenance building (far left). Golf architect Donald Ross began his re-design of the course one year later.

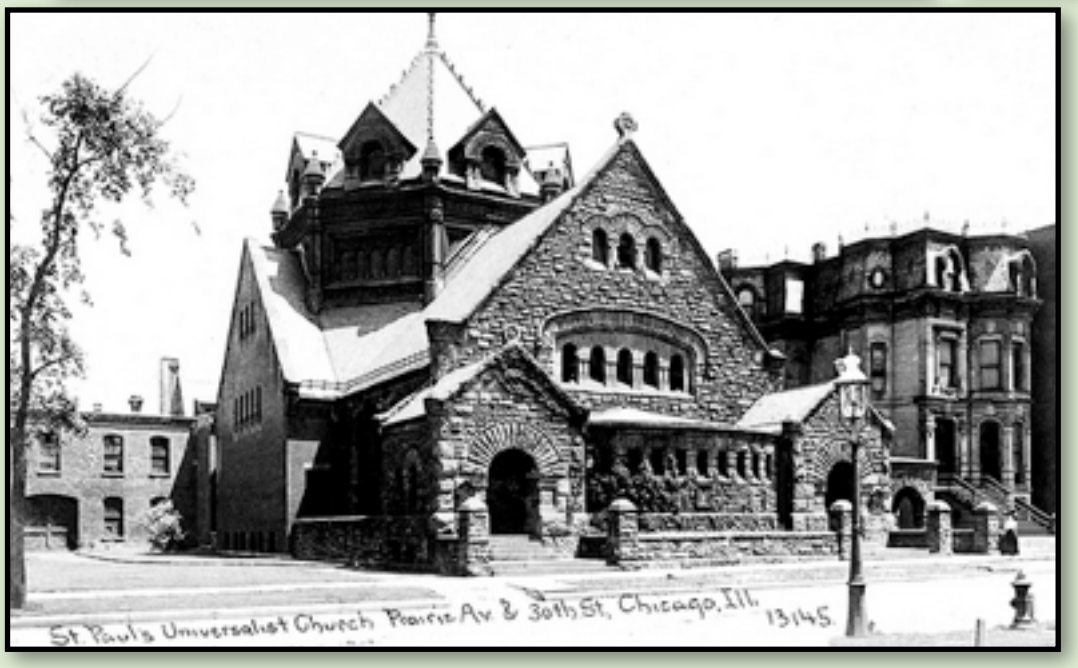
The course layout in 1914 opened for play in 1907, designed by Exmoor's golf professional Stewart Gardner, a native of Prestwick, Scotland. Gardner was Exmoor's pro from 1907-1914 and from 1921 until his untimely death in 1931 at age 53.

He also designed the Sunset Valley Golf Course in Highland Park (1928).

An accomplished player, Gardner is famous in American golf for the most consecutive top 10 finished in the U.S. Open Championship (seven, 1900-1906) a mark he shares with golf greats Bobby Jones and Ben Hogan.

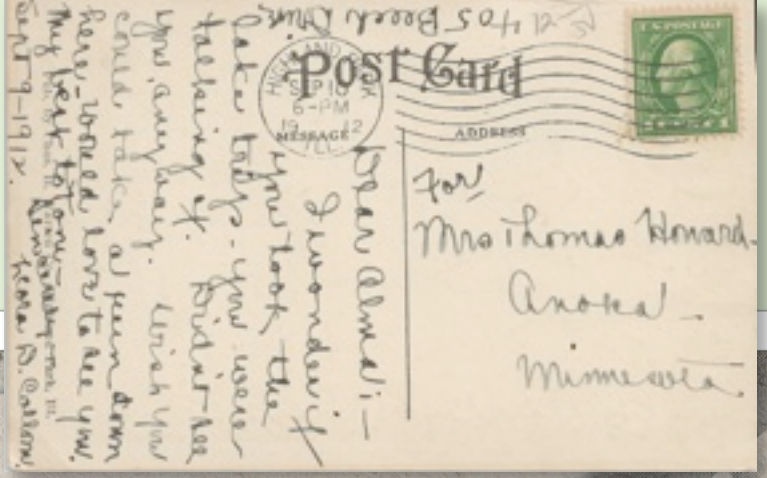
Charles R. Childs (previous card) was Chicago's first prominent documentary photographer. Starting in 1908 and continuing through 1912, he went block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, creating one of the most exhaustive photographic records in Chicago history — compiling more than 5,000 penny postcards that portrayed the city with remarkable clarity and realism.

In 1908, the Childs Co. was the leading manufacturer of "real-photo" postcards in Chicago. Read an article about Child's life and career at the end of this document.



Publisher: Chas. H. Warren Co., Highland Park, Ill.
Postmark: September 10, 1912, Highland Park, Ill.
Sent to: Mrs. Thomas Howard, Anoka, Minnesota.

"Dear Alma, I wonder if you took the lake trip - you were talking of. Didn't see you, anyway. Wish you could take a run down here - would love to see you. My best to Toni, Sincerely, Leora D. Calhoon"



Parlor, Exmoor Golf Club, Highland Park, Ill.

Pictured again, on the far wall is a moose head, later moved to the Mens Bar in 1928, when a new south wing of the clubhouse opened (today's south wing).

The moose head, unfortunately, has long disappeared, but the arrow points to a sterling silver cup in the display case -- the stunning Marshall Field Trophy, won by the club in the tenth and final year of inter-club competition in 1909. The Trophy has been in Exmoor's possession since that year and is now displayed in Heritage Hall.

Publisher: E.C. Kropp, Milwaukee
Postmark: Highland Park, 1907(?)
Sent to: Miss Lulu Frost, Milwaukee, Wisc.

"Abe wanted to drop a line but was never sure of the address, will run chances. Alice."

Publisher: Chas. H. Warren Co., Highland Park, Ill.
ca. 1910-1915

Post Card

MESSAGE | ADDRESS

PLACE STAMP HERE
DOMESTIC
CANADA
GREAT BRITAIN
GERMANY
ONE CENT
FOREIGN
TWO CENTS

Exmoor Club House, Highland Park, Ill.

This card captures a patriotic moment after World War I, the summer of 1919. The clubhouse was draped with huge red, white and blue bunting, ready for a glittering Military Ball to honor Exmoor members returning from war duty.

To the right (below flag) is the Walter Carr Dance Pavilion. Special guests: "Illinois Governor and Mrs. Lowden, Rear Admiral and Mrs. Basset, and Major General and Mrs. Leonard Wood."

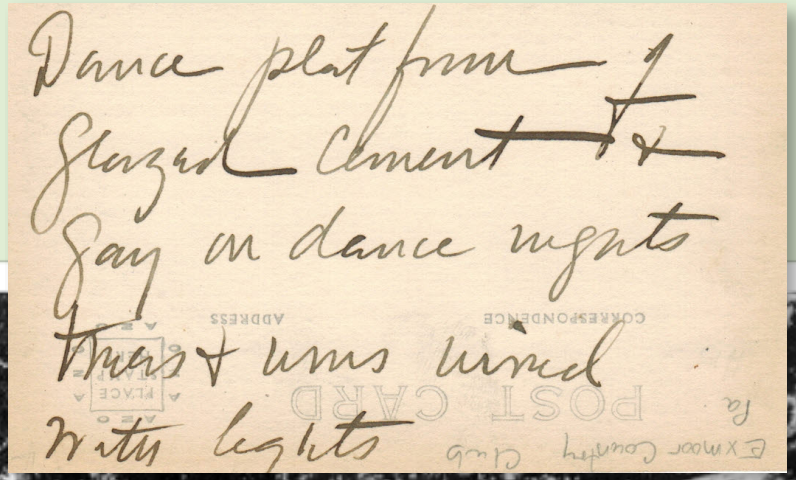
Chicago Tribune: "The feminine population of the fashionable north shore are getting ready their best bibs and tuckers for the military ball at Exmoor Country Club to welcome home nearly 25 per cent of the club's members, whom have been in some branch of war service.

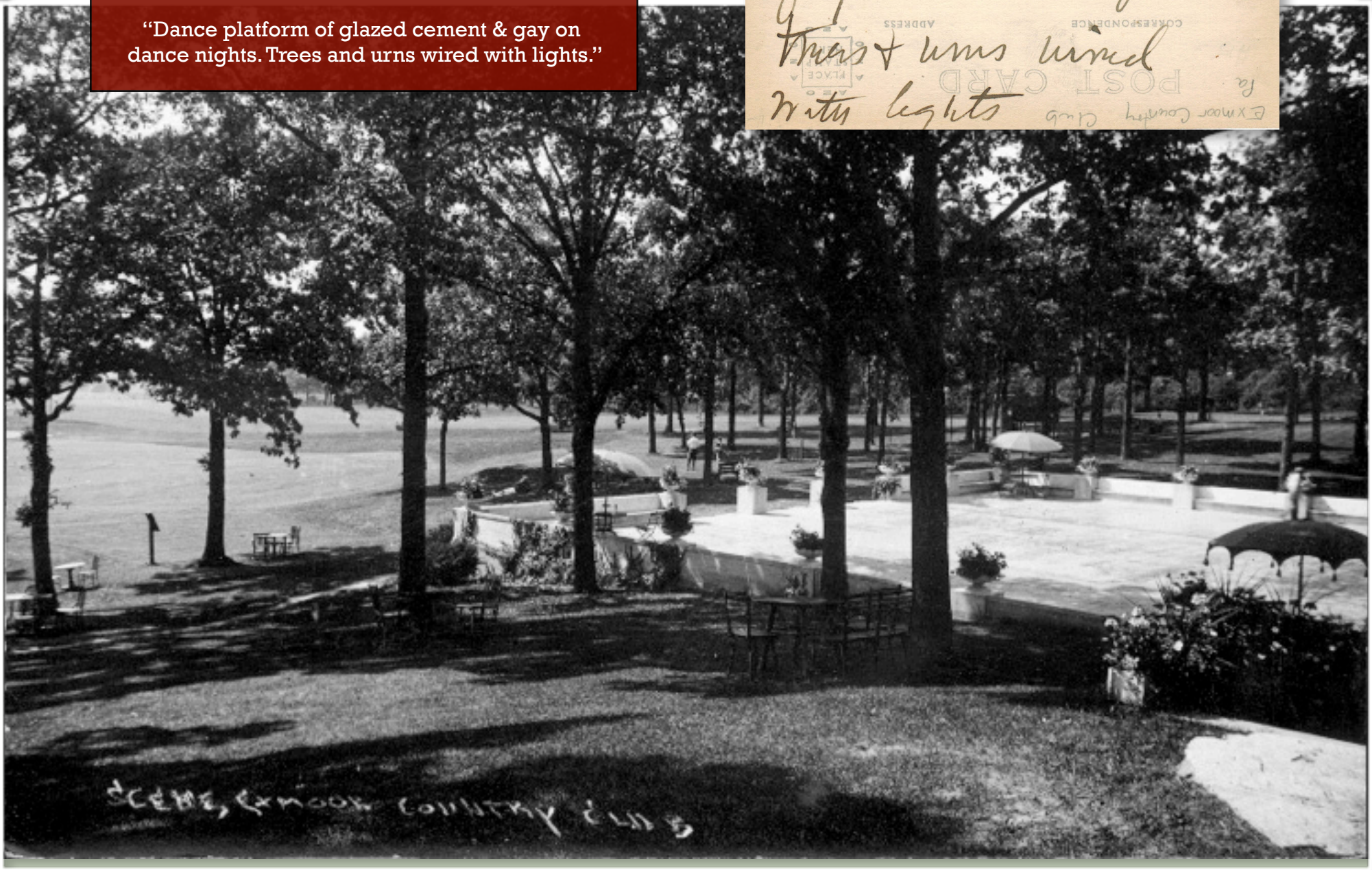
"Dinner for 300 will precede the ball. This year, hearts will beat lighter and feet prone to dance than they were in 1917 (during the war)."

Exmoor's Dance Patio was erected around 1920, replacing the Walter Carr Dance Pavilion near today's swimming pool. Mr. Carr was Exmoor's 6th president (1910-11).

For nearly a century, the Dance Patio has been the scene of many happy summer events.

"Dance platform of glazed cement & gay on dance nights. Trees and urns wired with lights."





Exmoor's 16th green, ca. 1910-1915.
This view, looking northwest, shows the treeless vistas that once defined the golf course.

West Side of Clubhouse, ca. 1925

Publisher: H.B. Brooks, Chicago
Postmark: Highland Park, 1923
Sent to: Mr. O. E. Sands, Kenmare, N. Dak.

"We are out for a ride and got this far. It is some day for a lark. Hope you are well, Regards from all, Stakers(?)."

Inside the Archive Room

The club's postcard collection -- plus more than 1000 vintage photos, key club documents, and memorabilia relating to Exmoor's history -- are maintained in the club's Archive Room, on the first floor near the elevator.

Members have donated important trophies, event pins and other ephemera with Exmoor logos.

The History Committee also acquires selected Exmoor items for sale on the internet.

Photos and documents are organized within a rigorous filing system.

Annual reports dating to 1898 are kept in a fireproof cabinet.

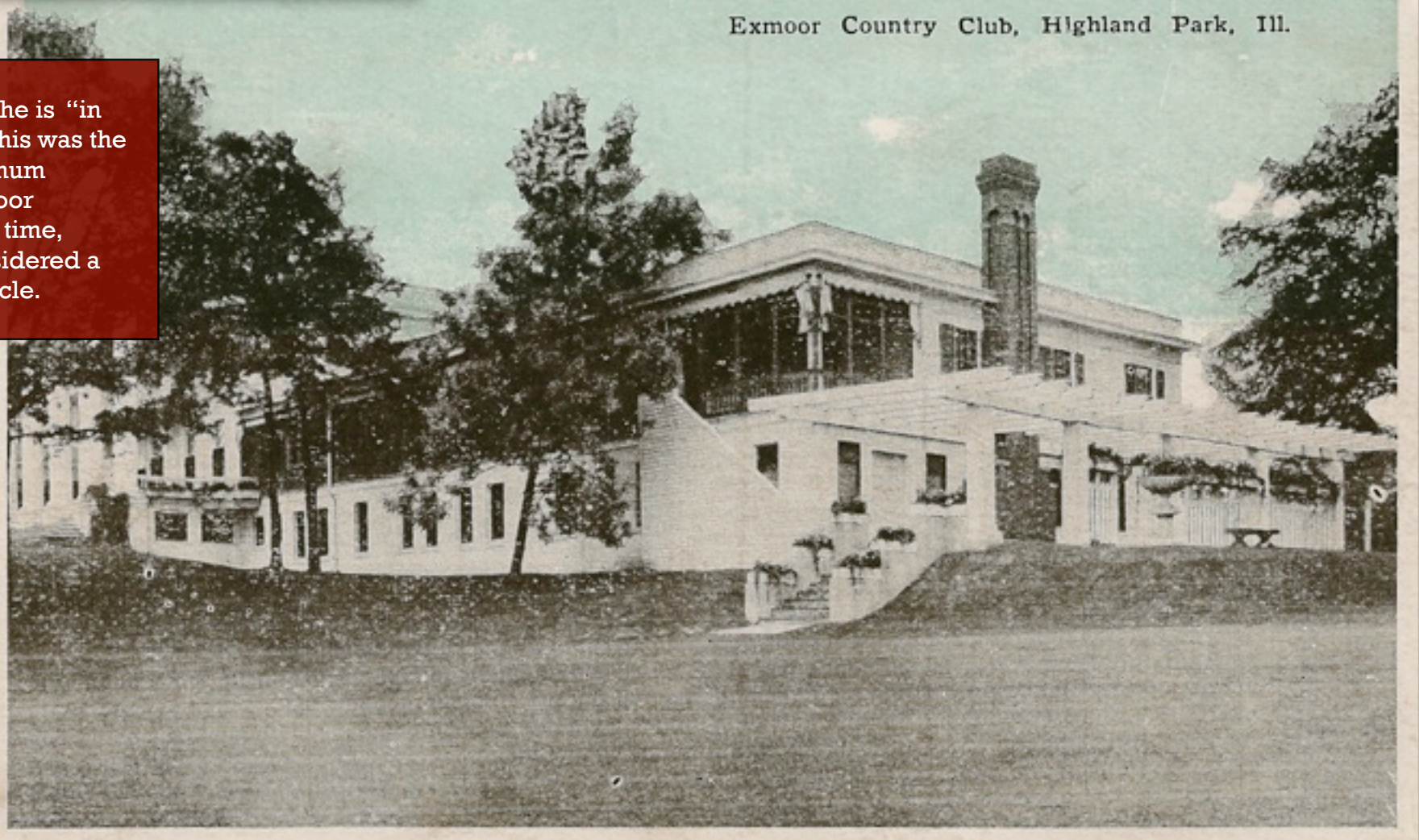
Formed five years ago, the History Committee gathers, preserves and interprets Exmoor's history. Members are Don Holton, Bill Inglese, Steve Murray and Janie Taubensee.

Publisher: E.G. Kropp, Milwaukee
Although postmarked March 17, 1942 in Highland Park, this scene shows the south end of our clubhouse, prior to 1928.

The sender may have saved the card or this image may have been published years later as a vintage scene.

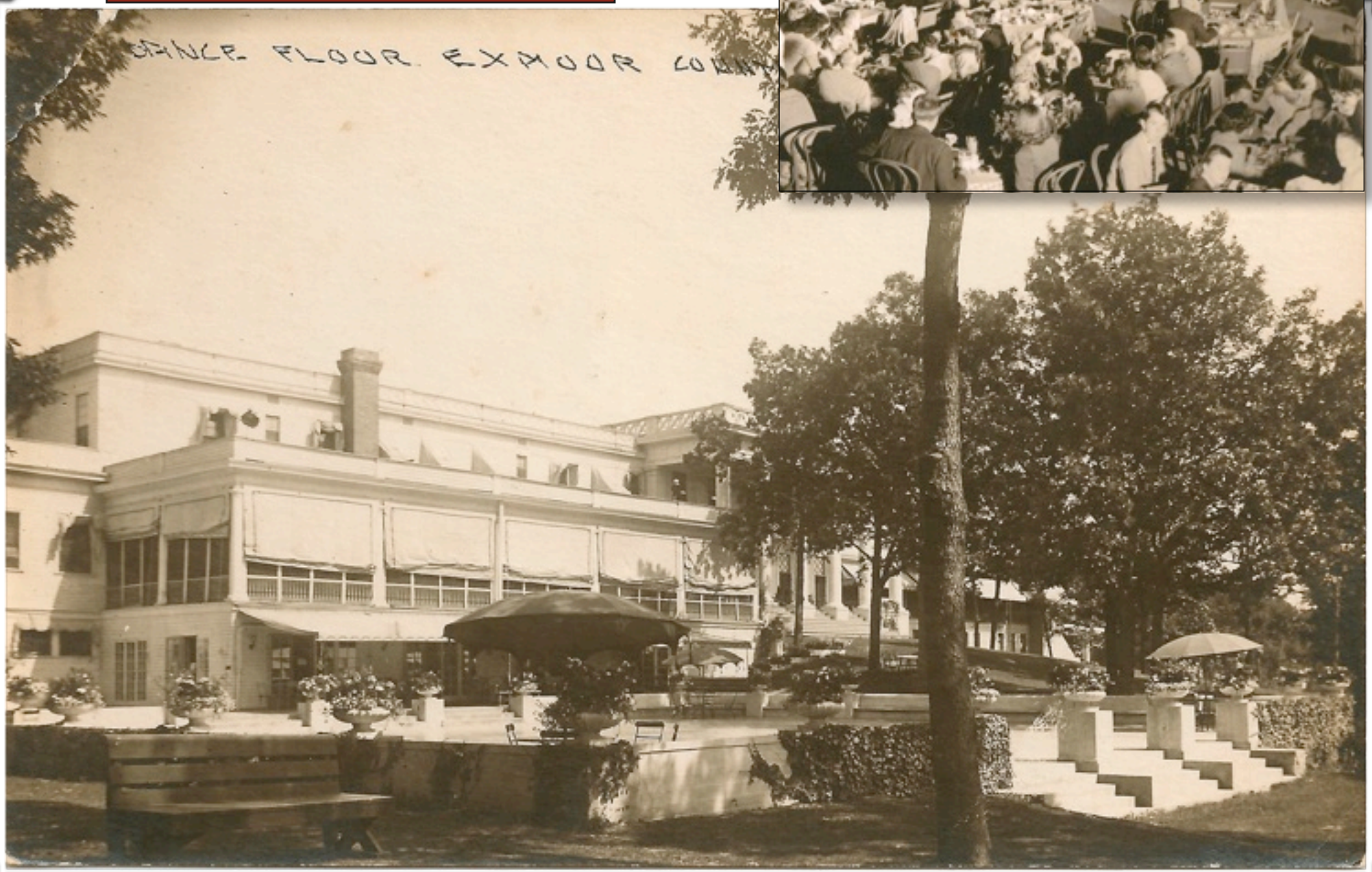
" I am in with the "400." The town isn't so hot, but you should see the home here. Hogan" (?)

The writer says he is "in with the 400." This was the specified maximum number of Exmoor members at the time, apparently considered a socially elite circle.



Dance Patio and Second Floor
Summer Dining Porch ca. 1925.

Right: Exmoor Dance, ca. 1930.



Published by: Chas. H. Warren, Highland Park

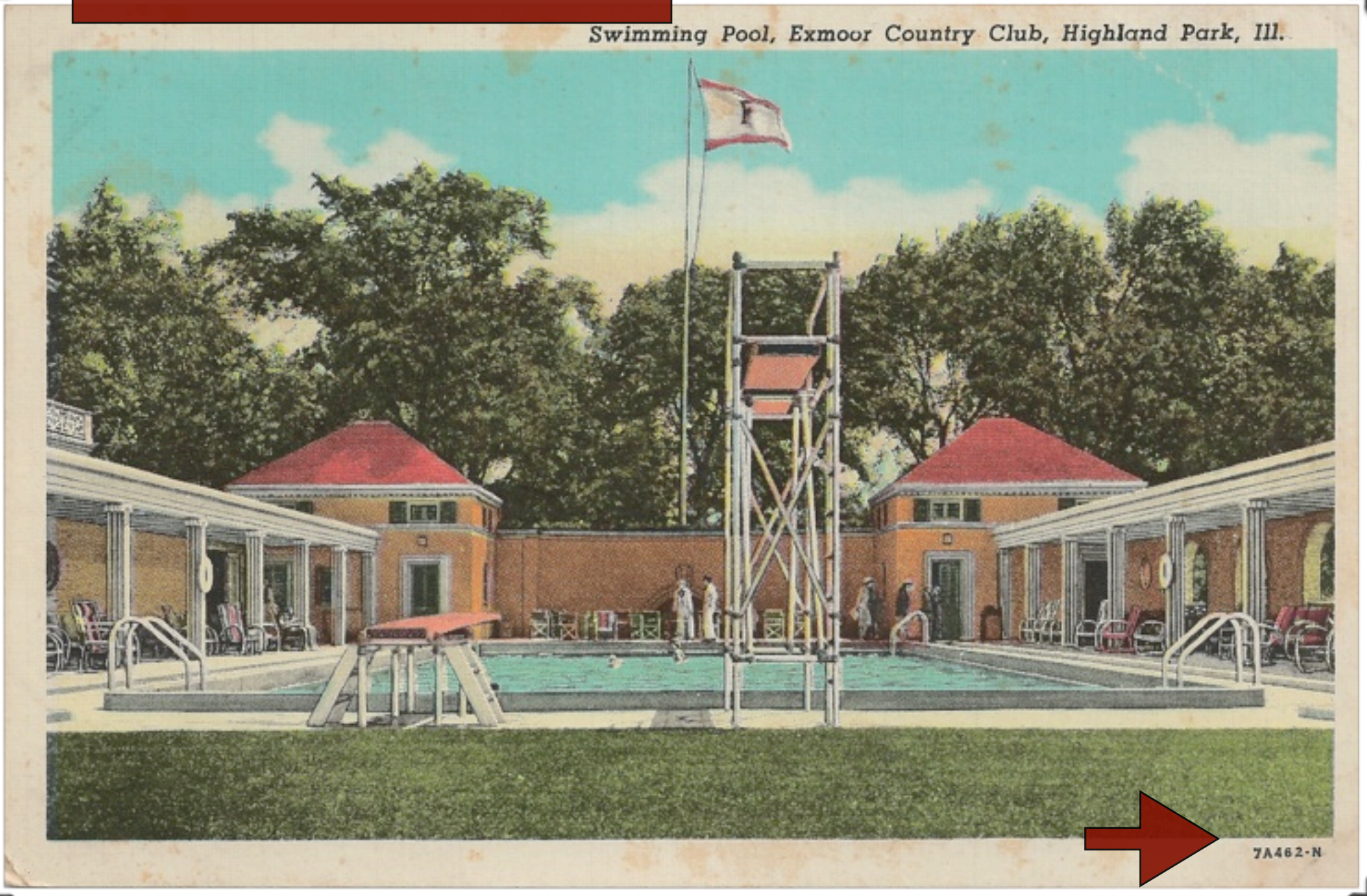
The Dining Room -- often called the Porch -- was a screened porch, located one floor above the west elevation, 1920s - early 1970s.

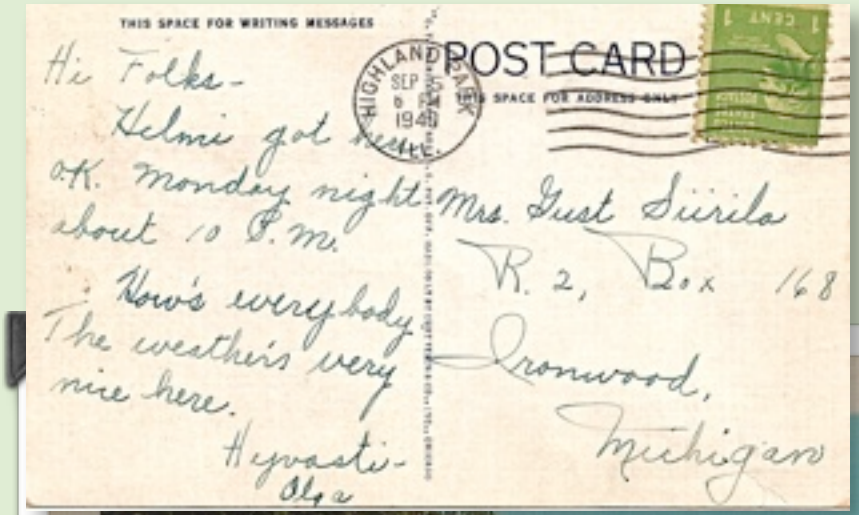
Dining Room, Exmoor Golf Club, Highland Park, Ill.

Publisher: Curt Teich Co.

Teich took creative license with this image,"colorizing" the walls (always white) to a salmon color. Tall trees were also inserted to provide a contrasting backdrop.

Curt Teich cards can be dated easily, by a published numbering system (arrow below). The "A" represents the decade of the 1930s. Combined with the "7," this card was printed in 1937, two years after the Exmoor pool opened.





Publisher: Curt Teich, Chicago
Postmark: Highland Park, September 5, 1940
Sent to: Mrs. Gust Siirila, Ironwood, MI

"Hi Folks, Helma got here OK Monday night about 10 P.M. How's everybody. The weather's very nice here. Hyvasti (Finnish for goodbye) Olga"

Curt Teich (1887-1874) was a German printer who moved to Chicago and built America's largest postcard company. A resident of Glencoe, his postcard collection now resides at the Lake County Discovery Museum.

A scene of repose on the west steps, after a formal event, ca. 1945.

This center section of the clubhouse remained until 1974, when replaced with the entrance, Grill and nearby rooms of today.

This image is displayed in the foyer of the clubhouse, near the elevator.

Clubhouse ca. 1925

South wing, clubhouse, ca. 1930.

Constructed in 1928, the south wing is the second oldest existing Exmoor structure (oldest is the Golf Shop 1919).

Architect Ralph D. Huszagh, an Exmoor member (right, center, 1937), designed the south wing.

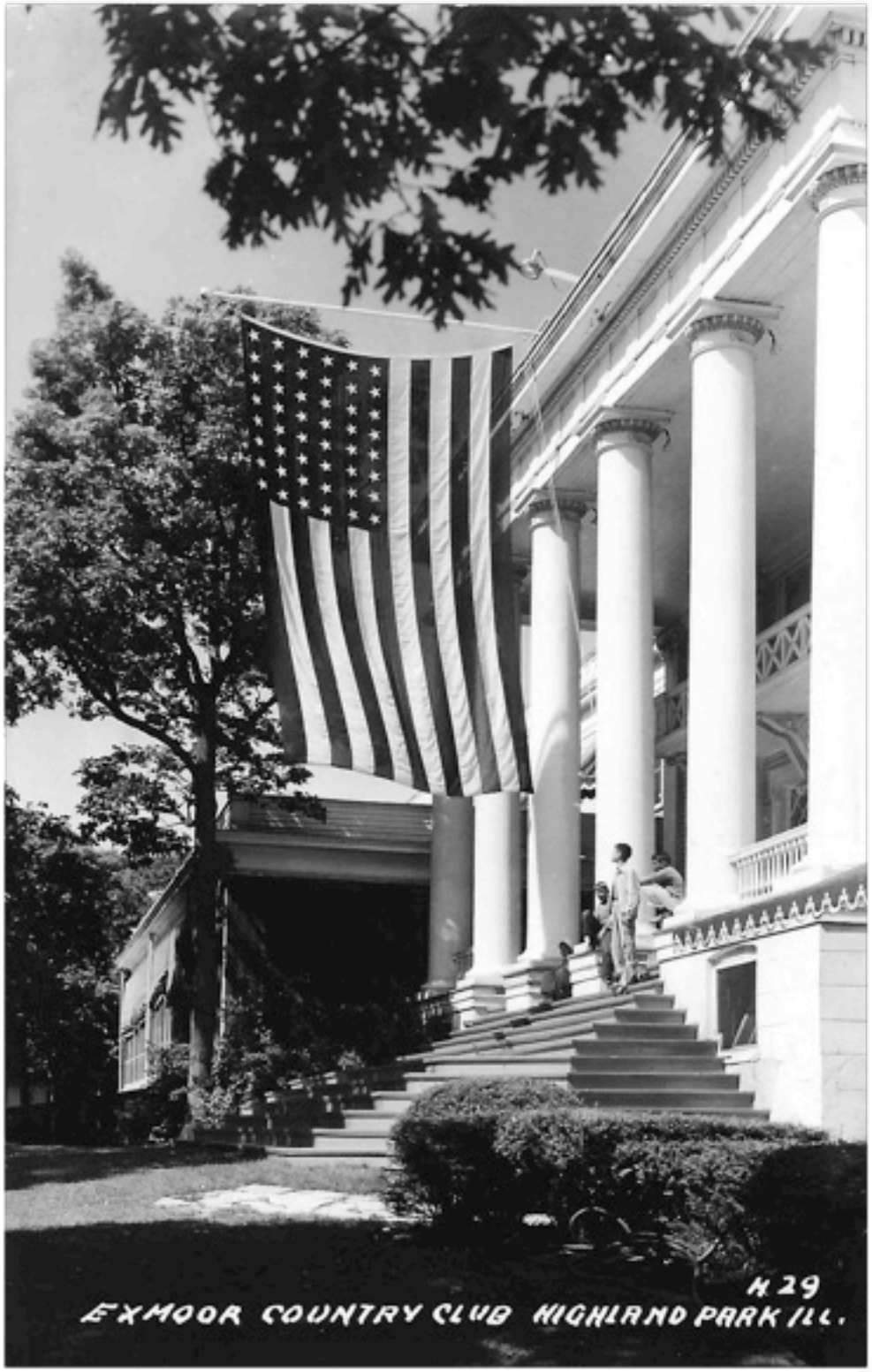
Mr. Huszagh designed notable buildings at the University of Chicago, many North Shore homes and the famous Aragon Ballroom, Chicago.

Publisher: L.L. Cook, Milwaukee
Postmark: Venice , CA 1947
Sent to: Martina Soto, Tampa. Fla.

"Dear Martina, We are all fine. I hope you are too. Here in Calif is cold. I just wonder if there in Tampa is cold too. I bet you are missing me too. Here in Calif are very beautiful places to see. My husband send the best regards to you. From Angie Costa"

Flag Day, West Steps, ca. 1945

This image has been enlarged and is displayed in the clubhouse vestibule.



This final card shows the 18th green, with the old practice green (left),ca.1940. The stone steps led from the west edge of the swimming pool area.

These steps are also shown in a photo from 1935 (right) donated to Exmoor in 2012 during a visit to Exmoor by Mrs. Joan Kemper, former wife of James Kemper (Kemper Insurance and Kemper Lake Golf Club). Mrs. Kemper (center in right photo) lives in Ojai, CA.

Mrs. Kemper's visit (left with daughter Suzanne) was the first time she had been at Exmoor in more than 70 years. Current member Ed Bernardi remembers caddying for Mrs. Kemper in the 1940s.

History By Mail

Photo Postcards Are Snapshots Of Time Gone By

January 02, 1994 | By Abigail Foerstner. Special to the Tribune.

Born in the 1890s in Chicago, the humble penny postcard turned out to be a gold mine, documenting life at the turn of the century and bringing pictures to everyone's doorstep before many people had cameras.

Salesmen who doubled as photographers began to fan out across the country, taking pictures for the growing souvenir postcard industry. At the same time, but in another world of photography, reformer Jacob Riis roamed New York City documenting social ills and Eugene Atget wandered Paris taking some of the most poetic pictures ever committed to film.

Chicago postcard photographer Charles R. Childs straddled these two worlds and occupies a unique niche in Chicago history. He was a businessman in a burgeoning industry concerned with neither reform nor poetry. He documented city street corners and bucolic suburbs in hundreds upon hundreds of photographs for the C.R. Childs Co. line of postcards.

He started taking pictures in Chicago in 1901 and continued for the next 50 years. But he never gained the reknown of photographers such as Edward Weston, who was born in Highland Park in 1898, or Weston's contemporary Walker Evans, who lived in Kenilworth for a few years as a boy.

In fact, almost everything about Childs is a mystery, despite his archive of nearly 5,000 postcards at the Chicago Historical Society and his popularity among area postcard collectors.

The archive opens a window to a world that already had vanished by the time Childs died in 1960. Ironically, he, too, vanished almost without a trace after leaving behind a visual history of a lost era.

None of his larger competitors, with their national sweep of images, duplicated his tireless attention to the country towns that would mushroom into today's suburbs.

"He was the only one out there documenting small-town Illinois. If Childs covered a local event, he photographed something the smaller papers didn't have facilities to print and the larger papers didn't care about," says Larry Viskochil, curator of prints and photographs at the historical society.

The golden age of postcards came and went over the course of Childs' career, when half a dozen giant Chicago postcard printers and distributors placed Chicago among the nation's postcard capitols. Postcard baron Curt Teich, a German immigrant, opened the Curt Teich Co. in town in 1898 and built it into the largest volume picture postcard printshop in the world.

Photography, invented in 1839, began to bring exotic places to the family parlor through sets of stereo cards, which were introduced in the United States in the 1850s. The cards, bearing two images shot from slightly different perspectives, gave a three-dimensional effect when seen through the stereo viewer.

"Every family had a dish of stereo cards and a viewer. The whole concept was that you could travel by viewing the cards," says Viskochil.

A public infatuated with stereo cards quickly fell in love with postcards. In the years after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition introduced the American souvenir postcard, every parade, every new building and every disaster became the opportunity for another card. Postcards cost a penny apiece and so did the stamps to send them. Restaurants, hotels and any glee club worth a song commissioned cards of themselves to serve as keepsakes and advertising. The publishers commissioned artists to draw holiday postcards filled with fetching cherubs and saccharine romance.

Everyone from grand dames to street sweepers sent postcards in a great deluge of mail after 1898, when the U.S. Post Office established rural mail routes. At the time, three-quarters of the people in the country lived in the towns and on the farms served by the new routes.
After 1907, when postal laws again changed and allowed postcard messages to be written on the address side of the card, the industry spurted again. Before that, the message had to be tucked under the picture, making brevity the rule of the day.
The giants like the Curt Teich Co., the Barnes-Crosby Co., the V.O. Hammon Postcard Co. and the United Card and Novelty Co., all in Chicago, cashed in on the climate of postcard mania by printing and distributing millions of cards each day.
"People would send a postcard if they got as far as the Chain O' Lakes for a holiday. Now people only send a postcard when they get to San Francisco or Hong Kong," notes Ralph Teich, a son of Curt Teich who joined the family business in the 1940s.
Magazines and newspapers offered little competition at the turn of the century. Only the big-city publications were using the halftone printing process that allowed direct reproduction of photographs, and they printed pictures sparingly. Postcards filled in the gap with images of fires, accidents and even hangings. The cards offered an alternative news service and a testament to people's grim fascination with disaster.

Personal postcards were as popular as the souvenir variety. Eastman Kodak Co. made a special photographic printing paper cut to postcard size-3 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches. The company also introduced a postcard camera that enabled anyone to turn family pictures into postcards. But rather than buy the camera, people often would have a family portrait shot as a postcard at commercial photography studios that offered backdrops such as Niagara Falls or Halley's Comet.
Despite the variety of images and equal variety of collectors clubs, postcards have never received the artistic recognition accorded other forms of photography.

"They were meant to be mass-produced so it gets a little too far afield" from the original prints collected by art museums, says David Travis, photography curator for the Art Institute of Chicago.

Famous photographers such as Andre Kertesz and Josef Sudek did print on postcard stock, Travis notes. "These little gems are the most valuable of the Kertesz prints. He'd send them to people, but he'd put them in envelopes or mount them on vellum. You wouldn't see them as postcards but on the back, it says `carte postal.' "

Though hardly in a league with Kertesz, Childs' cards are prized among postcard buffs because his sharp, near luminous black and white pictures are real photographic prints. He may have had assistants photographing for him in later years, but he most likely took all the early views himself, says Viskochil.

Childs worked with 5-by-7-inch glass-plate negatives at first and later shifted to film. The majority of his postcards capture romantic scenes such as a pastoral Naperville, row boats floating through lotus beds in Fox Lake or a dirt road heading into the shaded countryside from Evanston.

He photographed political conventions, parades and fires, and wasn't above a few cheesecake cards of buxom beauties in come-hither poses. But he also had an eye for candid street shots and unusual characters, such as a flamboyant knife-thrower and his long-suffering female assistant.

Chicago postcard collector Harold Wolff has painstakingly reconstructed Childs' past, the closest thing available to a portrait of the publisher other than a couple of company photographs. Wolff scoured cemeteries, church records, old community directories, phone books and census tracts to piece together the biographical facts summarized here.

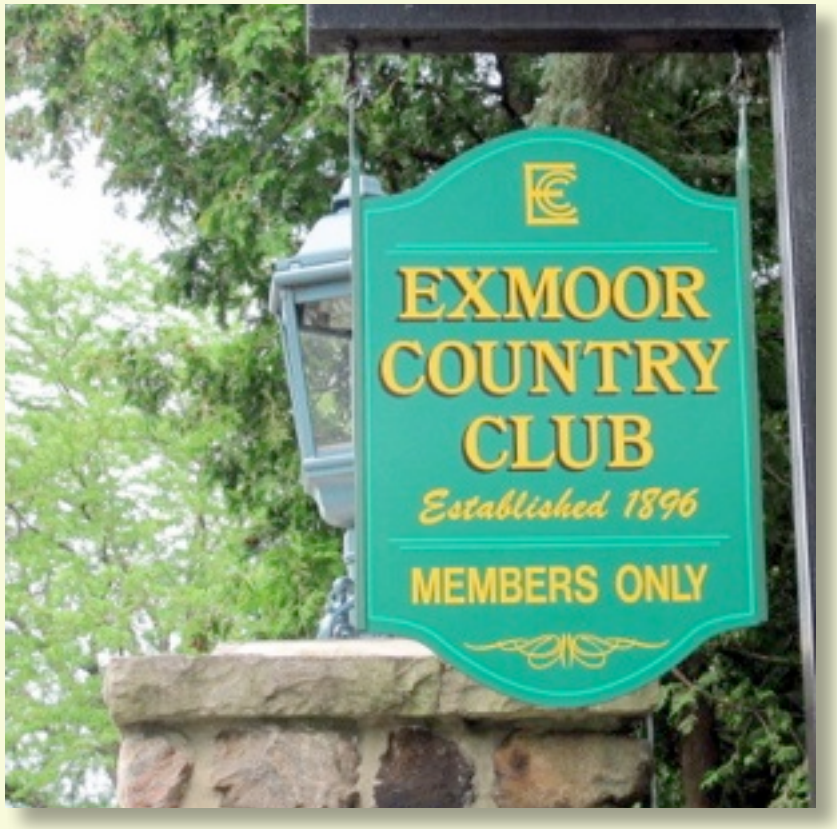
Childs was born on March 28, 1875, in Elwood, Ill., near Joliet, to John M. Childs and Sophronia Olivia Pinneo. The father died by the time Charles was 5 and he, his older brother, John, and their mother lived with her parents during his childhood.

The family moved to Joliet in 1889. John Childs went to work with his uncles in the Pinneo grocery business. Charles Childs joined the Joliet Daily News. He apparently learned photography at the paper, though he worked in circulation and had a sideline electrical business.

Childs set up shop as a commercial photographer after he moved to Chicago around 1900. He started making postcards and taking other printing jobs, as well, a few years later. Needing more space, he moved his business from the Loop to a three-story building at 5707-15 W. Lake St. in the Austin neighborhood. His business remained open on Lake Street into the 1950s.

He lived nearby until his death of heart failure on Jan. 14, 1960. Childs is buried at Mt. Olive Cemetery, 5800 N. Narragansett Ave., at a grave site in a family plot of his longtime secretary Mary Pedersen. Pedersen died at age 80 in 1959 and is buried at the plot as well. He never married. His death notice doesn't indicate any surviving relatives or friends who could fill in the missing details of his personal life.

The Chicago Historical Society bought the Childs archive of postcards and negatives from a now-deceased Chicago area collector and the estate of another deceased collector holds another voluminous archive.

Childs would undoubtedly be astonished that his early penny postcards are selling now for the premium price of from $5 to $30 at postcard shows.

"The real photographic postcards are always pretty high because they're actual images," says Wolff.